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AUTHOR Hickcox, Edward S.
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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that examined the administrative practices of effective senior administrators in Ontario, Canada are presented in this paper, which is based on the theoretical concept of "facilitative power" as described by Dunlap and Goldman (1991). This approach views effective leadership as working through others rather than exercising power over them. Data were obtained from interviews conducted in 10 Ontario school systems with 10 chief executive officers who were identified by their peers as effective. Findings indicate that administrators spent much of their time in meetings and interaction with diverse groups. They viewed their efforts as bringing potentially antagonistic forces together and as providing support. The data supported the concept of facilitative power, in that the administrators' practices focused on working through people in the system to achieve improvement or to reach a vision. Eight tables are included. (LMI)

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PRACTICES OF EFFECTIVE CEO's

A Preliminary Discussion

By

Edward S. Hickcox
Department of Educational Administration
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

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Background

This paper presents data collected from Chief Executive Officers in ten Ontario school systems about their administrative practices. These CEO's had been identified as effective administrators through a reputational technique. All CEO's in Ontario were asked to identify the five most effective administrators in the Province. The ten top choices constituted the sample.

Only a small amount of the available data is presented and the analysis is preliminary. The study is part of a large funded study of central office administration underway in the Centre for Leadership Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.[1]

The next section develops a conceptual framework which serves as an organizer for the discussion. This is followed by a brief description of the methodology followed by data analysis. The paper concludes with a summary section.

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[1] This study was supported by a grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada. It was part of a larger funded study titled *The context and Future of School System Administration*.

Framework

Traditionally, analyses of senior administrators in organizations in general and in educational systems in particular have focused on power relationships, generally in terms of a top down model of power relationships, rooted in notions of classical bureaucracy. (Abbot, M.G. & Caracheo, F. 1988).

Reform literature has focused on notions of participatory management, or, perhaps, power from the bottom rather than the top. (Pfeiffer, 1981). A recent discussion by Dunlap and Goldman (1991) introduces the concept of facilitative power. This concept examines power in terms of the leader's activities designed to create or sustain favorable conditions for the organization. It allows individuals to enhance their individual and collective performance in the organization.

The concept does not argue for either a top down or a bottom up notion of power. Rather it looks at the exercise of power by administrators in terms of a set of assumptions about superiors, peers and subordinates which seems more realistic in the context of today's complex organizational cultures.

Dunlap and Goldman (1991, 13-14) posit four categories of activities practitioners engage in when they are exercising facilitative power:

1. They help arrange material resources that provide support for educational activities.

2. They select and manage people who can work together effectively, paying attention to both the skills and the personalities that comprise the mix.

3. They supervise and monitor activities, not to exercise hierarchical control but to stress feedback and reinforcement and to make suggestions.

4. They provide networks for activities, adding members to groups, linking groups to activities elsewhere, helping groups to "go public" with activities , and diffusing new ideas.

"In short, facilitative power implies working through others rather than to exercise power over them."(Dunlap and Goldman, 14).

In Ontario within the past four years, 45 of the CEO's of the Province's 135 school systems have been appointed. (Esch, 1992) These new senior administrators seem markedly different from their predecessors in a number of respects. They seem to maintain a lower profile, are less often in the public eye, on television, or in print. While they head huge organizations with thousands of employees and more thousands of students, they seem a far cry from the autocratic, ostensibly powerful leaders of an earlier time. Neither, however, do they seem to be mere servants (Hickcox, 1967) of either their school board employers or of the mass of individuals for whom they are responsible.

The notion of "facilitative power" as defined above may fit them. The data presented here will suggest that there is basis for further examination, using notions of facilitative power.

Methodology

The original design for the larger study called for the identification of "effective" administrators. Quite apart from the conceptual difficulties in even defining "effective", the researchers had neither the time nor the resources to engage in extensive effort to seek out effective administrators in terms of any objective measures. Instead, each of the Chief Executive Officers of viable school systems in the Province was asked to nominate five colleagues who were "effective" administrators. The respondents were not given any set of criteria or any sample definitions. Hence the results are based purely on whatever internal model each respondent had about what constitutes effective administration. One hundred and eleven ballots were sent out; seventy-four were returned.

Eleven CEO's emerged as having more nominations than their colleagues. One declined to participate in the study, however, so that ten were selected. The number of nominations received by individuals was less than might be expected. The top candidate received thirty nominations, but the next in line had dropped to fifteen and the remaining nine (of the original eleven) received between ten and fourteen nominations.

Several comments can be made on the basis of these results. One is that there is certainly no dominant group of administrators in the Province in terms of the perceptions of practicing CEO's. More revealing, however, are comments from the ten who participated to the effect that they do not interact all that much on a wide basis. Rather, they know well only CEO's within their own geographical area. The popular notion of extensive and widespread networks among CEO's did not emerge in this study.

Ten of the eleven top choices agreed to participate in the study via an on-site interview. These were all conducted in the fall of 1991. Interviews were taped, and notes were developed from the tapes.[2]

A major aspect of the interviews was an effort to determine the number, length and kinds of meetings attended by CEO's. Each respondent was asked to examine his or her calendar for the past twenty working days. Each day was gone over to count the number of meetings held, their length, and the groups or individuals at the meetings. Results are reported in terms of board meetings, central office meetings, school level meetings, teacher meetings, community meetings and others.

The interviews explored in some depth the nature of these meetings, and of their relationship to those attending the meetings. They were asked also to discuss the relative importance of the various groups. In addition, the CEO's responded to other questions about their practices on the job. Of interest for this paper are the responses to questions about the amount of

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[2] Appreciation is expressed for the contribution of Joyce Scane, Research Officer at OISE, who conducted the bulk of the interviews, compiled the notes, and processed the data on meetings.

time spent in their offices alone, the kinds of materials they read, their modes of communication.

Results

Background

Of the ten CEO's, all had earned B.A. or B.S. degrees. One had his degree from abroad; all the rest had studied in Ontario universities. Nine of respondents had Masters degrees, most often from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in either Curriculum or Educational Administration. The one who did not have the advanced degree indicated that the CEO job had almost been lost because of this gap. None of the ten held a doctorate, although one was enrolled in a program and intended to finish.

One of the ten respondents was a woman.

Five of the CEO's were from large systems of more than 25,000 students. Five were from medium sized systems of between 15,000 and 25,000 students. None were from the numerous small districts in the Province. Two respondents were from Catholic school boards, publicly funded in Ontario but separate from the public boards. Two were from boards in northern Ontario. The rest were distributed across southern Ontario, essentially representing all parts of the Province.

Respondents were asked to indicate magazine subscriptions they held apart from educational materials. Table 1 reports these.

Table 1

Magazine Subscriptions Reported by CEO's

(Frequency According to 1st Three Rankings)

Magazine	Frequency by Rank			
	Rank 1	Rank II	Rank III	Totals
MacLeans	4	1		5
Sports Illustrated		1		1
Hockey News			1	1
Fortune	1			1
New York Times		1		1
N.Y. Review of Books			1	1
Education & the Law		1		1
Speechmaker			1	1
Financial Post	1			1
City and Country Living			1	1
National Geographic		1	1	2
Harpers		2		2
Equinox	1			1
Scientific American	1			1
Newsweek	1			1
Golf Digest			1	1
Antiques			1	1
Atlantic		1		1
New Yorker	1			1

Half of the CEO's subscribed to *MacLeans* magazine, a general news weekly patterned after *Time* and *Newsweek* in the U.S. Only *National Geographic* and *Harpers* had more than one ranking, with a wide variety of magazines indicated by individuals.

Respondents were also asked to indicate educational journals and magazines read regularly. Only one individual reported reading the scholarly writing in Educational Administration or related fields. Several read general management materials. Most read popular educational journals such as *School Executive* and *Phi Delta Kappan*. One CEO said he liked to read French novels in French.

Career Lines

The ten CEO's had career lines that were amazingly similar. With only two fairly minor exceptions, they followed the traditional lock step patterns

characteristic of Ontario. They became classroom teachers, either at the elementary or secondary level. In fact, four had been secondary teachers, three elementary teachers, and one had taught in both panels. They all had progressed to the principalship, some as department heads and then vice principals, others as vice principals only. From principal they had proceeded to a superintendency in the central office before being appointed as CEO. Only one came through coaching, incidentally. English teaching was the most common subject matter background.

One of the exceptions was an individual who had taught in the business area at the secondary level and then proceeded directly to a coordinator's role. He had never been a principal. Another had been a teacher and a department head but then had moved to the Ministry of Education before being appointed director.

CEO Meetings at the Board Level

Table 2 presents the length and frequency of meetings held during the twenty day period for the ten CEO's.

Table 2

CEO Meetings at the Board Level
Over 20 Working Days

N = 10 CEO

Meeting	Length in Hours				Frequency			
	High	Low	Ave.	Med.	High	Low	Ave.	Med.
Board of Education	15.5	2	8.45	7.75	4	1	2.4	2
Board Committees	23	3	12.7	11.5	14	2	5.6	4.5
Board Chairperson	17.5	0	3.85	.35	8	0	2.2	1
Chairperson/Others	29.5	1	11.6	12.13	17	1	4.3	7.5
Totals	**21.4**	**1.5**	**9.2**	**8**	**10.8**	**1**	**4.3**	**3.8**

On average, CEO's spent the most time at the board level in committee meetings, an average of 12.7 hours. This was followed closely by meetings at which the chairperson and other individuals were present. Nearly four hours were spent in one on one meetings with the chairperson, although this finding was skewed by the fact that one CEO spent more than 17 hours with the chair during the period in question, dealing with a crisis in one of the schools. Approximately 27 hours was spent on average by CEO's in meetings at the board level.

In terms of frequency, meetings with Board committees took place most often, an average of 5.6 times during the 20 day period. Meetings with the chairperson and others occurred 4.3 times on average. Meetings at the Board level occurred 19 times during the 20 day period.

CEO's have offices in a central office where a variety of staff work. As expected, many meetings are held with central office staff. Table 3 reports meetings with the central office staff.

Table 3

CEO Meetings at the Central Office Level
Over 20 Working Days

N = 10 CEO's

Meeting	Length in Hours				Frequency			
	High	Low	Ave.	Med.	High	Low	Ave.	Med.
Senior Cabinet	25	8	13.4	13.5	7	3	4.3	4
Supervisory Officers	35	1	12.3	11.3	21	1	9.6	9.5
Office Staff	13	0	5.1	3.5	13	0	4.9	4
Average	**24.3**	**3**	**9.4**	**9.4**	**13.7**	**1.3**	**6.3**	**5.8**

CEO's spent the most time in meetings with senior supervisory officers, frequently called the Administrative Cabinet, or the Administrative Council. The average time was 13.4 hours. The least amount of time over the period was 8 hours, the most 25. Typically in Ontario, these are regularly scheduled meetings, usually on Monday mornings. Additional meetings are scheduled as required.

Other supervisory officers also command a lot of meeting time, an average of 12.3 hours with the most frequency in this category, 9.6 times. Relatively little time was spent with other office staff in meetings, an average of 5.1 hours in 4.9 meetings. Many of these, according to the interview data, were with executive secretaries or administrative assistants.

One respondent reported meeting with supervisory officers 21 times during the 20 days and with office staff 13 times. Total meetings on average occurred 25 times.

It is conventional wisdom that CEO's should "spend time in the schools", even in the large school systems represented in this sample. We would expect, therefore, that many meetings would occur with principals and teachers. Table 4 reports these results.

Table 4

CEO Meetings at the School Level
Over 20 Working Days

N = 10 CEO's

Meeting	Length in Hours				Frequency			
	High	Low	Ave.	Med.	High	Low	Ave.	Med.
Principals/Staffs (Non-Teaching)	33.5	2	16	24	16	3	8.4	8.5
Teachers	8.5	2	5.1	5.9	9	1	4	4
Average	21	2	10.5	15	12.5	2	6.2	6.2

Sixteen hours were spent on average with principals and non teaching staff. The median length was 24 hours, indicating that at least five of the CEO's spent a major portion of time in the schools. Meetings with teachers averaged 5.1 hours. Total meetings in this category averaged 12.

Table 5 reports CEO meetings at the community level, with interest groups, parents and parent organizations. CEO's are often portrayed as playing a crucial political role in the community, the focal point of contact between school and community. In terms of meetings, at least during the period examined, this assumption is not borne out relative to other kinds of meetings. On average, CEO's spent 4.4 hours in meetings with community groups, and averaged only three such meetings. Seven of the eight meetings were with community interest groups, but most of these are accounted for by one CEO who met 17 times with community groups. Only one CEO met with a Home and School (PTA) group.

Table 5

CEO Meetings at the Community Level
Over 20 Working Days

N = 10 CEO's

Meeting	Length in Hours				Frequency			
	High	Low	Ave.	Med.	High	Low	Ave.	Med.
Community Groups	29.5	1	11.6	12.13	17	1	7	7.5
Home and School	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Parents	6	0	1.2	.25	3	0	1.4	1
Average	2.4	0	4.4	4.7	7	0	3	3

CEO's indicated considerable time spent in meetings with other kinds of groups, outside of the school, office, and community. Table 6 reports these results.

Table 6

CEO Meetings In Other Settings
Over 20 Working Days

N = 10 CEO's

Meeting	Length in Hours				Frequency			
	High	Low	Ave.	Med.	High	Low	Ave.	Med.
Conferences/ Professional Development	39.5	0	17.5	18.3	9	0	4.4	4
Ministry of Education	17	0	4	2.75	5	0	0	1.5
Federations/Unions	6	0	2.3	2	5	0	0	1
Average	20.8	0	7.9	7.7	9.1	0	1.5	2.2

An average of 17.5 hours was spent at conferences and professional development activities, ranging from no time spent by one individual to nearly 40 hours spent by another CEO who went to a three day conference during the period. About four hours were spent on average with the Ministry of Education but the range was from one individual who spent 17 hours in Ministry meetings to one who spent no time.

Table 7 reports averages for the ten CEO's for the five categories of meetings. The highest average number of hours spent was in meetings at the school level, a somewhat surprising finding given the prevailing view that the political aspects of the role at the board and community level are paramount. The CEO's, however, generally confirmed in the interviews the value they placed on school visits and interactions with school level people. The least average time was spent in community meetings, 4.4 hours. With the exception of the school level meetings, it seems clear that the time of the CEO's, at least as a group, was fairly evenly distributed over the other four categories.

Table 7

Summary of CEO Meetings by Level
Over 20 Working Days

N = 10 CEO

Level	Length in Hours				Frequency			
	High	Low	Ave.	Med.	High	Low	Ave.	Med.
Board of Education	21.4	1.5	9.2	8	10.8	1	4.3	3.8
Control Office	24.3	3	9.4	9.4	13.7	1.3	6.3	5.8
School	21	2	10.5	15	12.5	2	6.2	6.2
Community	2.4	0	4.4	4.7	7	0	3	3
Other	20.8	0	7.9	7.7	9.1	0	1.5	2.2
Totals	**18**	**1.3**	**8.3**	**9**	**10.6**	**.9**	**4.4**	**4.2**

What becomes evident on closer inspection is that CEO's spend an enormous amount of time in meetings. CEO 1, for example, who was head of a large suburban board with more than 50,000 students, reported a total of 109 hours of meetings during the twenty days. This is equal to about five hours a day every day in meetings of a formal nature, not including one on one encounters, except for the chair of the board. CEO 8, likewise the head of a system of more than 50,000 students reported 127 hours of formal meetings for the same period. The CEO of the smallest system with about 15,000 students, reported 111 hours of formal meetings. In general, there does not seem to be much variation according to size or geography.

On balance, it would appear, that if you ask what it is that a CEO of a school system does, the answer is that he or she goes to meetings. There is not space in this paper, nor do we have the data, to indicate very much about the nature of these meetings. A companion paper by Leithwood, Steinbach and Raun (1992) goes in some depth into what happens at meetings attended by CEO's.

Importance of Groups

The respondents were asked to rank order the various groups and individuals they met with in terms of importance. The results are not exactly congruent with the data involving time spent.

Table 8

Rank Order of Groups According to Perceived Importance

N = 10

Group	C. E. O. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Chairs	1		1	4	1	1	2	1		1
Trustees		3	2		3		4		4	4
Asst. CEO			3							
Senior Admins.	2	1	4	1	2	3	3	2	1	2
Principals	4	2		2	4	4		4	2	
Teachers						5			3	
Admin. Officers	5			3			5			3
Consultants										
Secretaries	3						1	3		
Sec. of Board						2				
Federations			5	5	5			5		

Six of the CEO's felt that the Chair of the Board was the most important individual or group with whom he or she interacted. Only one ranked the chair 4th out of 5. Next in perceived importance, overall, were senior administrators with school board members ranked next. At the bottom were representatives of the unions and federations, a rather surprising finding given the degree of labour unrest currently characteristic of Ontario school systems.

Communication

Nearly all mentioned frequent communication, either in person or by telephone, with the chair. Several met daily. All except one had regularly scheduled weekly meetings. One CEO agreed on the importance of the chair and the board, but he felt discouraged that so much of his time was spent in this way. He wanted to be in the schools more. Variation in the time spent

with chairs seemed related to whether the chair was full time or part time. Several chairs had offices right next to the office of the CEO and there was almost constant contact.

What were the discussions like? Generally, they seemed to cover a wide range of topics, far beyond particular agenda items for the next meeting. Several CEO's tried to emphasize looking ahead, seeing what was down the road, working out an educational philosophy. Talk also was political, as to what was happening at the board level and within the system relative to political activity.

Reading, Writing and Wandering

CEO's spent relatively little time alone in their offices, reading, writing, or thinking. One spent not more than an hour a week alone in his office. From two to four hours would be typical, with the time spent going through correspondence. Only one spent as much as ten hours a week alone in the office.

On the other hand, several indicated that they took reading and writing chores home with them, spending an hour or two at night or more typically time on the weekend at these more thoughtful tasks.

All spoke of their preference for one on one personal contact as opposed to memo contact or telephone contact. None indicated that they sent many memos. Only one said that he used e-mail to communicate.

Along with this, with two exceptions, the CEO's liked to wander about the office and about schools, making personal contact with employees, students, and parents who might be around. They all placed a priority on visiting schools and most wished they could do more of that.

Conclusion

This preliminary analysis shows a lot of support for Dunlap and Goldman's notion of facilitative leadership. The notion of autocratic power

being exercised, or the notion of the CEO as a servant of various interest groups in the system was not supported. Rather, the practice of these CEO's focused on working through people in the system to try to bring about improvement or to reach some vision, either of the individual or the system.

The CEO's in talking about the various meetings they had with a variety of individuals spoke often of the effort to provide as much support as possible for programs. In a sense, they saw their activities as attempts to bring potentially antagonistic forces together, in a sense to hold the thing together.

The fact that they spent so much time in meetings with such a wide variety of groups and individuals suggests a genuine focus on providing feedback mechanisms throughout the system, of developing networks, of trying to find ways of working together effectively. Some networks were broader than others, extending outside of the system. But no matter how the relationships were structured, there is little doubt that what CEO's did essentially was interact with people.

These CEO's are people executives. They want to meet face to face, to talk, to argue, to interact. They don't write much. They don't read all that much. What they do is talk to people.

The data available from this study will permit further rather extensive examination of the nature of the interactions carried out by these CEO's. Other parts of the overall project should fit nicely into these findings to provide an authoritative picture of the nature and context of central office administration in school systems.

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